

## **ARTURO REGHINI**

Considerations

on

**The Ritual of the Free Mason Apprentice**

**with a note on the life and Masonic activities of the author**

**by GIULIO PARISE**

### **EDIZIONI DI STUDI INIZIATICI**

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NAPLES

Arturo Reghini was born in Florence on November 12, 1878, into an ancient and illustrious family. Gifted with a lively and uncommon intelligence, a profound critical spirit, and broad clarity of vision, he was blessed by his native land with pure elegance of expression, profound and sometimes biting wit, and a polemical impulse. His diligent study of every discipline developed his talents, enriching his mind with vast and profound knowledge; balancing the achievements of his inner *discendi cupiditas* with the demands of the most rigorous criticism, so that his inner and outer actions found strict norms in his habit of science. The Florentine environment he frequented served to refine his dialectical skills, bringing him into contact with writers, artists, philosophers, scientists, and politicians of the most varied tendencies, with the finest minds of the age. I believe that it is rare for such a wealth of knowledge to be found in a single person: a humanistic education that allowed him to delve deeply into classical thought in the original texts, knowledge of the main modern languages and many ancient ones, a refined taste and an ability to understand art in all its manifestations. He became what is commonly referred to as a scholar. In addition to this, he possessed rare talents, far exceeding those of the best, guided and developed in the discipline of art, which made him an exceptional being.

He visited Rome several times, even for long periods, before settling there. He arrived in Rome in 1896 and met Mrs. Isabel Cooper Oakley, delegated by Helène Petrowna Blawatsky. Together with her and others, he founded the Italian headquarters of the Theosophical Society in 1898, participating in its activities with lectures that were often lively due to his sharp criticism.

At the end of 1898, he went to Turin, where he formed a theosophical group headed by Dr. G. Sulli Rao at the *Ars Regia*.

In 1902, in Palermo, he was initiated into the Royal Lodge "I Rigeneratori" (The Regenerators), of the A. and P. Rite of Memphis and Mizraim; returning to Florence, in 1903 he joined the Royal Lodge "Michele di Landò," under the authority of the Grand Orient of Italy based in Milan, of which Malachia De Cristoforis was Grand Master. The "Michele di Landò" Lodge was dissolved and

reorganized, without interruption of its work, in 1905, under the name “Lucifero,” and A. R. was one of its founders. During that period, the Grand Orient of Milan merged with that of Palazzo Giustiniani.

In Florence, A. R. frequented the Caffè delle Giubbe Rosse and sometimes the Paszkowski, participated in the “La Voce” and “La Fronda” movements, and met Papini, Prezzolini, Campa, Macinai, Augusto Hermet, Roberto Assagioli, the “Lacerba” group, etc. In 1903, he founded the Biblioteca filosofica (Philosophical Library), which he directed until 1908, where he collected precious works, including Masonic ones.

Welcomed into the best society, sought after for his conversation and knowledge, he contributed to the revival of spiritual values that reacted against the suffocating materialism of the end of the century. It was a time when theosophy and spiritualism, occultism and magic, and all the so-called initiatory sciences aroused the greatest interest.

Some may remember hearing or reading fleeting references to an indigenous tradition, of a purely Italian character, handed down from ancient times and still existing today. Some scholars of Masonic matters know that after the creation of the Grand Lodge of London, during the period of maximum expansion of the initiatory brotherhood, so renewed in form, there were those who, from England and France, came here to seek those rules of the Art that were known here and nowhere else.

A. R., a student in Pisa, heard himself called one evening by a young stranger; they were together, and with others, for many years, in a communion of work and spirit that sometimes appeared to the astonished eye of the common people as a prodigy and a fairy tale. That encounter marked the beginning of what was to become A. R.'s mission in Italian and universal Freemasonry, in the political field and in that of initiatory studies. A. R. was initiated in the highest sense of the word: he experienced the trials of the *five* elements not only as a participant in a ceremony that is now just a distant echo and has retained an outward resemblance to the ancient mysteries, but as a profound reality, a tenacious yearning, and the arduous realization of his spirit. Crossing the threshold of death was not only a ritual symbol, but a real experience, a vision, and knowledge. Having attained enlightenment, he quickly decided on the action to be taken, unique in essence, twofold in form: to restore Freemasonry to its initiatory function, stripping it of its deteriorated elements; to orient society towards an order based on spiritual values.

An action from within, in Freemasonry as it was constituted, found its greatest difficulty in the friction it would undoubtedly cause among brothers who followed other paths; hence the idea of creating a new organization, which was the Italian Philosophical Rite, founded in

1909 by Eduardo Frosini, A. R., Alessandro Cavalli, Umberto Maggi, Amerigo Bianchini, Alberto Gennari, Vittorio Falorsi, and others.

In addition to its initiatory content, the Philosophical Rite aimed to bring together the various Italian Masonic lodges into a single body, initially through a federal system, which was achieved with the Scottish Rite of Cerneau, the Eastern Rite A. and P. of Memphis and Mizraim, the Martinist Rite, and later with the Templars and other smaller groups. It enjoyed considerable success, managing to bring together elements of the highest order, but its ranks were disrupted by the events of the First World War. In 1919, it merged with the Scottish Rite Masonry of Piazza del Gesù. Later, E. Frosini

reconstituted it as an independent organization, and it still exists today, having been reconstituted again after the fall of fascism.

In order to act on a social level, A. R. conceived a movement, whose ideal content was declared in an article written in 1913 and published in 1914 in the magazine *Salamandra*, entitled *Imperialismo pagano* (Pagan Imperialism). In it, A. R., referring to the best and universally recognized qualities of the Italian people, their common talent, the genius of many, their constant industriousness, to everything that our land had given to humanity over the centuries, he hoped for a renewal of concerted action that would allow us to regain our lost primacy in every field, spiritual, moral, artistic, legislative, commercial, etc.; and to reestablish '**imperium** not with the violence of arms, but by becoming and being '**better** than all other peoples. History teaches us that religious intolerance, which paganism did not know, had its roots and bitter fruits in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam; intolerance is contrary to all freedoms (and not only to freedom of religion, worship, or thought); and in the thought of A. R., in the vision of a universal society organized according to a hierarchy of spiritual values, where *empire* is synonymous with order and freedom, tolerance and mutual respect, these concepts were expressed with the adjective *pagan*.

It is not possible, at this point, to clarify further this particular aspect of A. R.'s thinking, which only his closest friends were able to understand in depth, while to others it appeared as a banal form of pagan anti-clericalism. I will also refrain from dwelling on the fortunes, deviations, and derivations of the movement started by A. R.

A. R. loved his country deeply and had a special fondness for Rome. Here he found himself in 1911 organizing a demonstration for April 21, with a manifesto that surprised the forgetful Romans; here he found himself even later, when, as a fervent interventionist, he animated with his eloquence the popular uprisings that demanded the redemption of their brothers from foreign rule; it was here that, in May 1915, at the end of a demonstration on the Capitol, he raised a flag and led the crowd to the Quirinale to demand and obtain a declaration of war, in which he actively participated; he reached the rank of Captain of the Engineers.

In 1921, he returned to his beloved studies, collaborating with newspapers and magazines, and moved to Rome where, already well known and appreciated, he took on the role of editor-in-chief of the *Rassegna Massonica*, which he held until 1926, also carrying out fruitful work with foreign Masonic powers, many of whom wanted to appoint him honorary member of their respective Supreme Councils.

Our meeting was, in a sense, fateful; I met A. R. when he was preparing his book on "Le parole sacre e di passo ed il massimo mistero massonico" (The Sacred Words and Passages and the Greatest Masonic Mystery), published in 1922. At that time, he lived in a modest room, where the most interesting thing, after him, was a small bookcase with his books. I had the opportunity to see him often, forming a deep friendship that lasted for 25 years, until his death.

In 1924, he founded and edited the journal of initiatory studies *Atanòr*, which continued in 1925 as the journal "*I- gnis*"; these are two precious volumes, in which A. R. lavished his erudition, his spirit, and his high teaching in many articles. Then came the dissolution of Freemasonry.

The figure, work, and thought of A. R. were too well known for him not to become the object of particular attention on the part of those who, for many years, were the arbiters of the destiny of Italy and of every single citizen. A. R.'s Masonic activity had to diminish considerably after the dissolution of the order, the devastation and occupation of the headquarters, limiting himself to contacts with the very few trusted people who remained close to him and frequented him at their own risk. The problem of daily bread also had to be resolved, as all his modest sources of income gradually dried up; the publication of the magazine *Ignis* could not continue because almost all of its numerous subscribers had disappeared; his contributions to newspapers and magazines ceased

because the signature of A. R. could raise suspicions of who knows what obscure links with the Freemasons operating in the shadows. Thus, in 1926, A. R. was forced to resume his freelance teaching profession.

Even without *Ignis and* burdened by his professional work, A. R. never ceased his research and scholarship. Between the winter of 1925 and the spring of 1926, he completed an extensive monograph on the person and writings of Henry Cornelius Agrippa, which was published in the 175 pages preceding the Italian translation of Agrippa's *Occult Philosophy*. When the complete work was ready in draft form, as it had been done from a French translation, it was sent to A. R. for revision of the original text, and he took it with him to Calabria, where we went together to spend the summer.

In Calabria, in the land of Klingsor, we were together more than once in one of the mighty towers erected in ancient times to defend the coast. It was a tower built on a rocky platform resting on the seabed, which until a few years ago was completely isolated but is now connected to the mainland by a narrow strip of sand. The place is evocative because of the many legends associated with it, because it was one of the very first places inhabited by man in the Mediterranean basin in the Paleolithic era, because of its fossil strata, and because of the many traces, not only material, that its inhabitants left behind during the slow passage of centuries and millennia. Some enthusiasts of the so-called metapsychic may be interested to know that there are spontaneous "manifestations" of all kinds and that fragments of bones can normally be seen moving in a macabre dance around a skull that sometimes moves in the air, sometimes slides across tables, clattering its jaws and making the strangest noises, all in broad daylight. There are also tactile sensations, which can lead to the violent expulsion of unwelcome guests. After some protests about the disturbance, we became good friends with the local inhabitants, who also became our collaborators and companions. In that unique environment, isolated from all contact with the world, with no other concern than to provide ourselves with water and food, the days and nights passed as if we were living in a fairy tale world.

The revision of Agrippa's text could not be completed: the publisher protested that he would have to rewrite everything from scratch; the work was published in October 1926.

Two things were very important to A. R.: to have a periodical in which to continue publishing initiatory studies, in order to maintain or establish relationships with suitable people and prepare them to contribute their knowledge when Freemasonry could reorganize itself; and to gather the scattered ranks of Freemasonry. The publication of the magazine was quickly planned and decided upon; in 1927 and 1928, the magazine UR saw the light of day, and it was undoubtedly the most beautiful and complete publication of its kind ever produced to date. For obvious reasons, it could not be directed by A. R. or

by me, so the task of directing it was given to a man who ended up, among other things, demanding that the text of our articles be changed to remove anything that could even remotely be suspected of having any hint of Freemasonry. Naturally, UR ended up suspending publication.

At the end of 1927, after meeting with various brothers, A. R. was able to ascertain that there was a desire among all of them for an efficient reorganization of the order and the rite; but that too many of those who had once held positions of dignity and office appeared disorganized, hesitant, isolated, and discouraged any attempt. A. R. and two other full members of the Supreme Council, after careful examination of the situation and having ascertained that a regularly constituted Supreme Council no longer functioned in Italy, ritually constituted themselves, assuming the powers to reorganize the rite, with all the caution that the moment demanded, that is, with the rigorous selection of members and the establishment of personal relationships with individuals, such as to be able to find a perfect secular justification in any event.

Something was achieved and more was hoped for. Two meetings were held, with the participation of highly trusted members, one in June 1928 and a second a few months later. In implementing our program, we also took into account the fact that some organizations were still efficient which, being less conspicuous or less well known, had been able to escape the violence provoked by the law against secret societies and were affiliated with the Rite of Memphis and Mizraim, the Philosophical Rite, the Martinists, and the Templars.

With the closure of UR now decided, we decided to resume publication of *Ignis*; the first issue of January 1929 came out with some delay due to the completion of the relevant

formalities; the composition of the next two issues was already ready when the storm broke: first there was the sudden madness of a man who, pushing certain ritual practices too far, at a certain point was unable to maintain his balance due to excessive wine consumption and fell, letting slip some compromising remarks; then came the agent provocateur of the ever-infamous company, dressed in a cassock, who came within a hair's breadth of saving the soul of A. R. and mine with a few shots from his pistol. And the hurricane broke, with an article entitled *Manovre di massoni (Masonic maneuvers)* in the periodical *Patria*, simultaneously with another on *Roma fascista (Fascist Rome)* and then others, published in newspapers in Rome and the provinces, all written by the same author, with few variations in title and content. More than the work of the lawyers, it was undoubtedly good luck that saved us from worse trouble, but all that commotion resulted in such close and multifaceted surveillance of us that we were unable to have any contact with anyone, for fear of compromising even those we greeted.

After 1930, A. R.'s activity became increasingly limited to teaching, where his high standing, mastery of the subject, and teaching method had placed him among the very best in the esteem of his students, colleagues, and scientists. In our free time, we would get together with a few of our remaining friends; we would play chess, discuss the political troubles of the moment, but above all we would talk about what was closest to our hearts: the possibility, still too distant but certain, of better forms of civil life in the future, of a return of Freemasonry; and we thought about the need to lay solid foundations so that order and ritual could securely support the initiatory edifice and restore that knowledge and that Art, now almost universally ignored by those who had become Freemasons only by virtue of a patent. The aim of Freemasonry, defined in Anderson's Constitutions as 'the perfection of man', has not really been

achieved, not so much because of the inadequacy of the Masters of the Craft, but because of the clear prevalence within Freemasonry of external and hostile forces that wanted and brought about its decline, diverting it from its main purpose; all means were used, the field was left open to pride and vanity, discord and jealousy were stirred up, and with diabolical skill, the seeds of different, foreign concepts were sown, concepts that were easier to understand and more appealing, which spread, overwhelmed and ended up prevailing to the point of losing sight of even the essential things, or to postpone them and adapt them to others of lesser importance.

How many are there today who know the secret laws of the Art, to build a lodge or a temple according to justice and perfection of proportions? And how can one claim to build the inner temple according to the anagogical meaning of unknown norms?

A. R. had already seen the need to strip Freemasonry of everything that the succession of times and the incomprehension of men had superimposed on the original doctrine; he was perhaps the only one capable of doing so, thanks to his ability, preparation, depth and balance as a scientist, his knowledge and direct relations with those who could validly help him, and indeed he suggested the work plan. In three years, he completed the *Ricostruzione della Geometria Pitagorica* (Reconstruction of Pythagorean Geometry), which was published in 1935: it bears the flaming star on the title page; its scientific value was recognized by the Accademia d'Italia with an award. It is a work that all free masons should know, not only because it is accessible even to those with only a modest middle school education, but above all because it contains many pages that free masons could meditate on with profit. Unfortunately, the wickedness of the times did not allow the literal meaning to be developed in a Masonic way and the symbolic meaning to be unfolded; nevertheless, the brothers would have much to learn from it.

After completing his study of geometry, A. R. began work on *Dei numeri pitagorici* (On Pythagorean Numbers) in seven books, which took ten years to complete; it is an immense work, still unpublished. At the end of the introduction, A. R. says: "The laws, properties, and numerical harmonies that offer themselves to our contemplation are not human inventions; they pre-exist, they *are* in the abyssal depths of interiority and prove that the beauty of the visible cosmos corresponds to an equally admirable beauty of the inner universe. From the recognition of these beauties and harmonies, it will then be possible, Socratically and Pythagoreanly, to ascend and transcend, rising from material and human life to spiritual and divine life and to bring about that palingenesis which is the essential purpose of the 'Scuola Italica'.

The importance of this work is absolutely exceptional for the many lofty problems that find their solution in it; it is destined to arouse enormous interest in the field of science. And one cannot help but consider with melancholy how billions have been squandered in the most insane folly,

as even today millions are squandered on gambling and pleasures, while it is difficult to find the necessary funds for a publication of such value, a value that is not only mathematical and literal, but transcends form and requires a key to its understanding, which will be given in due course.

Meanwhile, political events were coming to a head, the problems of everyday life were becoming more difficult to solve, and the worst was yet to come, while A. R. had an urgent need to be freed from cares and worries in order to complete the work he had begun. Thus, in September 1939, he left Rome and

moved first to Bologna, then to Budrio, where he taught at the Quirico Filopanti Middle School. But our correspondence was more of a hindrance than a help, and we were overjoyed to be together again. Even though we were not completely isolated in our Calabrian tower, the great peace of the place was conducive to concentration and spiritual liberation. We communicated the results of our work, planning future projects and regretting that there were too few of us given the immense amount of work we saw needed to be done.

Then the war, with the so-called liberation of Rome, divided us; A. R., who remained in Budrio, just a stone's throw from the Idice stream, which for many months was the line where the fiercest fighting took place, did not move; artillery shells fell all around and many exploded in the small garden, damaging the house a little and seriously wounding a dear person. The war passed. A. R., unharmed, resumed freer contact with his old friends; he was animated by a new fervor, an eagerness to work; time was running out, for the Fates had already touched the thread of his life and the warning had been given. I asked A. R. about the philosophical and initiatory development of his work on Pythagorean numbers; in about two months, he was able to complete a volume on *Sacred Numbers in the Pythagorean Masonic Tradition*, wrote several articles, and sketched out plans for works he was unable to complete.

On the first day of July 1946, the spirit of Arturo Reghini broke its bodily bonds and passed into the Eternal Light. It was five o'clock in the afternoon. The sign had appeared. Arturo Reghini turned to the setting sun for a final farewell, for the last rite; then he leaned with his right hand on the nearby shelf, bent his gigantic stature toward the Great Mother, stood upright, and was free.

He left articles scattered in newspapers and magazines, which will be difficult to collect; much of him can be found in the *Rassegna massonica*, in *Atanòr*, *Ignis* and *Ur*; I have already mentioned his main works: *The sacred words and passages of the first three degrees and the greatest Masonic mystery* - the study on *Enrico Cornelio Agrippa and his magic - For the restoration of Pythagorean geometry* - *The sacred numbers in the Pythagorean Masonic tradition* - and the unpublished one: *On Pythagorean numbers*.

He left behind a legacy of thought to ponder, a program to be realized: to bring Italian Freemasonry back to its purest origins, to restore the values of initiatory knowledge and science in the lodges and among individual Freemasons, to develop and coordinate studies, in order to revive Italian communion in the esteem of sister communions, to reestablish a spiritual primacy that will allow posterity to see once again the turreted crown on the brow of Italy and the mystical star shining its True Light upon the peoples.

A. R. left behind an example of life, industriousness, work, spiritual elevation, and profound serenity, even when words and the pen lashed out; he left behind an example of what the Masonic spirit truly is, of brotherhood and solidarity beyond all vulgar prejudice, which knows how to appreciate effort, the will to elevate, purify, improve, and does not seek out doubts, uncertainties, or errors, near or far, with the vile and abject aim of suffocating, demolishing, or preventing a revival. He left behind an example of tolerance that is free from malice, gossip, and defamation, which values one's own freedom and that of others, whatever the action may be or appear to be.

It is now up to us to gather his spiritual legacy; to become ever more worthy of understanding, continuing, and perfecting his work; to persevere in the unceasing struggle against our open enemies and hidden false friends;

so that the Light of knowledge may shine forth in its entirety, the Freedom of the spirit may triumph, and Peace may reign in the hearts and minds of men.

#### GIULIO PARISE

The Vocabolario degli Accademici della Crusca (Dictionary of the Academics of the Crusca) says (1): “Frammassone, one who is enrolled in a *once* secret society.” Eight years after this definition by the Crusca, in 1907, Ottorino Pianigiani, in his *Vocabolario etimologico della lingua italiana* (2) (Etymological Dictionary of the Italian Language), in turn states that Freemasonry is that vast philanthropic association, *once* secret, also known simply as Masonry, whose emblem is the tools of the architect and mason as a symbol of universal progress, which is precisely its purpose, adding that Freemason is the exotic name for free mason from the French *franc-maçon*.

It is not easy to sum up so many inaccuracies and absurdities, even of a philological nature, in a few lines. In fact, about twenty years ago, we had the opportunity to show, with documents in hand, that the word “Freemason” is an old Italian medieval term (as is the word “lodge”), although it is historically true that the modern word “frammassone” is a derivation and Italianization of the French “franc-maçon,” introduced into the Italian language about 150 years ago. But this is not the point.

What is important is to note that no Masonic ritual has ever stated that Freemasonry has universal progress as its goal; and even a layman such as Pianigiani should have considered that this cannot be the case, because Freemasonry existed long before the belief in universal progress spread in the West, and because it would be quite absurd and superfluous to set as an aim something that, by definition and by nature, would be inevitable if the law of universal progress really existed and which, moreover, once achieved, would render Freemasonry meaningless. It naturally follows that it is not true that the tools of the architect and mason are the uniform of this alleged universal purpose and progress; this is a flawed consequence of the previous erroneous statement.

All Masonic rituals, ancient and modern, Italian and foreign, agree, beginning with Anderson's original and fundamental Constitutions (1723), that the purpose of Freemasonry is the perfection of man, and only in recent (and more *advanced!*) times have the unwise and the profane been able to assimilate and confuse this end with the concept and belief in universal progress, an absurd identification that makes the stated purpose of Freemasonry ridiculous, just as ridiculous as an association whose purpose was to work to ensure that spring follows winter. Furthermore, the idea of human perfectibility is an ancient idea and not a corollary of the modern theory of universal evolution, and refers or concerns only man and not the vegetable kingdom, the animal kingdom, or humanity as it belongs to the kingdom of beasts.

Over time and with progress, the ancient definition of the purpose of Freemasonry has undergone alterations due to misunderstanding, and modern rituals present variations that are apparently slight but substantially profound, affirming that the purpose of Freemasonry is the perfection of men (confused with the perfection of the individual), and then that it is the perfection of humanity (forgetting that of

the individual) and finally that it is the perfection of the human community, that is, of society. These are all chronologically later definitions, which are influenced by subsequent profane ideas and aims, although verbally the difference from the ancient initiatory definition is slight and goes unnoticed. Only by forgetting the initiatory character of Freemasonry is it possible to deny that the aim of Freemasonry is the perfection of the individual, to be achieved through ritual, or, in Masonic language, through the squaring of the rough stone and its transmutation into the cubic stone of mastery according to the rules of the Craft.

Without doubt, Freemasonry is still today an initiatory institution despite the alterations, deviations, and misunderstandings, and it is solely for this reason that it is the subject of our study. Freemasonry makes use of initiatory ceremonies as was the case in the ancient mysteries, and according to the present

) *Vocabolario degli Accademici della Crusca*; 5th edition, 1889; Vol. VI.

1. Ottorino Pianigiani - *Vocabolario etimologico della lingua italiana*; pp. 558 and 824.

and incitements of the ritual, actual initiation (i.e., perfection) can be achieved and conferred by full understanding and *support of* Masonic symbols. Many confuse ceremonial initiation with symbolic initiation, in that it symbolically represents the actual initiation, of which there appears to be no trace in Freemasonry; we clearly distinguish ceremonial initiation from the actual initiation represented by the initiation ceremonies and closely connect the actual initiation with the symbolic one, because in the Masonic tradition and ritual, initiation is both actual and symbolic, not in the sense of opposition between actual and symbolic, but in the technical, traditional sense, in that the symbols of the Masonic craft serve as a support, a basis for the work aimed at the transmutation of the rough stone and the perfection of the great work, in accordance with what happened in ancient times and in general in the guilds of arts and crafts.

Not only is Freemasonry an initiatory institution, but it is the only Western institution in which the mysteries handed down to us from classical antiquity survive, and this characteristic alone would be enough to make it a valuable subject of study, as a Romanian writer, Matila G. Ghyka, recently recognized. To avoid misunderstandings and to avoid offending sensibilities, let us say clearly from the outset that we do not intend to claim that Freemasonry is the only institution in the West today that transmits initiatory knowledge and that all other modern Western initiatory institutions and associations are worthless; we merely wish to point out that Freemasonry is a historical and spiritual offshoot of the ancient mysteries, founded at an unknown time and by unknown persons, and is a contemporary remnant of the classical mysteries; while other modern associations, or at least some of them, which have or claim to have a traditional initiatory character (such as theosophical, Templar, Rosicrucian associations, etc.) date back to a fairly recent and well-defined time and have well-known founders who have deliberately, for better or worse, linked them to previous institutions and occult *centers*, real or imaginary, excellent or not, but in any case and avowedly distinct from them. Freemasonry derives from Masonry, its symbolism is *its* symbolism, the symbolism of the material tools of the trade and of the science of building, architecture identified with geometry, which in the classical sense of the word also includes the science of numbers.

As for the secrecy of Freemasonry, we note first of all that the impartial and disinterested testimony of Crusca and Pianigiani denies that modern Freemasonry is a secret society, although it affirms that it

once was. We have dealt with this important question at length in our writings in the magazine “Ignis” and in the “Rassegna massonica” in 1925, reporting the categorical statements of two authoritative writers, Hughan and Keller, who deny that Freemasonry is a secret society (3), as well as the official statement made in 1917 by the Bulletin, *Organe Officici dii Bureau des relations maqonniques*, Berne 1917, which in its first paragraph explicitly states that Freemasonry is not a secret society. The source and date of these authoritative and competent statements are not suspect; but Senator Prof. Emilio Bodrero, a nationalist who in August 1921 began a campaign against Freemasonry in the official organ of the Society of Jesus, Civiltà Cattolica, and Benito Mussolini, who in May 1925 sponsored a bill against secret societies in the Chamber of Deputies, ignored or pretended to ignore the opinion of the Crusca and Pianigiani dictionaries, paid no attention to authoritative statements on the subject, and maintained that Freemasonry was a secret society, because otherwise the bill against secret societies would have been legally inapplicable to Freemasonry, and at that time the fascist regime was still concerned with appearing to observe the law. The Jesuit and Mussolini thesis was naturally accepted by the party and the fascist press and inspired the politics of fascism for twenty years, which saw Freemasonry as the regime's number one enemy; but it also found, impossibly, supporters in a small group of fanatical and uninformed Freemasons, who, at that very moment, went to great lengths to argue that Freemasonry was and had to be a secret society, thus handing the fascists the only weapon they could use against Freemasonry. We will not mention names and facts for the sake of brevity and because some

1. Hughan - *History of Free and Accepted Masonry*, 1881; p. XVI of the introduction. Keller - *The Spiritual Foundations of Freemasonry*, 1923.

of these Freemasons were probably unaware of the service they were rendering to the Jesuits; and also because today Italian Freemasonry has overcome fascist persecution, works and prospers, and, if it were to remember its adversaries, it would begin with those who were fully aware of what they were doing, such as Father Tacchi Ventura, Bodrero, Federzoni, Anfuso...

Apart from statements motivated by religious hatred, political interests, or partisan blindness, Freemasonry is not a secret association, but according to some, it once was. And in fact, it was so in Italy recently during its clandestine period, and it was so in Italy between 1820 and 1859; but this was not due to its intrinsic nature but to the necessity caused by oppression. Two centuries ago and more, Freemasonry was a trade guild known to all, which also had secret signs of recognition, a special language or secret jargon, and used trade symbolism. No more and no less than other trade guilds, which have almost all disappeared. None of these things are sufficient to constitute a secret society. Even today, the language used by mathematicians, doctors, and chemists is understandable only to initiates, but no one thinks of accusing mathematicians, doctors, or chemists of belonging to a secret society.

However, there is something secretive, something clique-like; there is something secret that arouses interest in some and suspicion and hatred in others. Recently, a Catholic writer *published a book* (4) *against Freemasonry, accusing it of false claims*, that is, of falsely boasting of possessing and transmitting a secret doctrine through a secret tradition, while according to Del Castillo (p. 139), at the heart of this secret tradition there is absolute emptiness. “The initiatory school,” says Del Castillo, ‘and through it the secret tradition, have taught absolutely nothing to humanity (p. 155)’; and therefore

Freemasonry has no value, and the reader is warned against those who want to foist the usual nonsense on him. How one can then support this thesis and at the same time (p. 141) claim that this secret tradition, that is, this absolute void, coincides, albeit in a corrupt form, with the Gnostic traditions, is something that only Del Castillo understands.

However, Del Castillo does not know or pretends not to know that with this “new weapon” he is breaking down an open door, because Freemasonry does not claim to transmit a secret doctrine and knows that it must not make such a claim. In fact, in 1921, an authoritative and competent French Freemason, Oswald Wirth (5), wrote: “Since the initiatory method refuses to indoctrinate anyone, it is hardly admissible that a positive doctrine was taught within the Mysteries.” Freemasonry knows very well that enlightenment comes through light and not through words, it knows that it is absurd to attempt to express ineffable wisdom, to enunciate, codify, and condense truth into a creed, it knows well that even intelligent acceptance of a creed is not knowledge, that believing in a creed is not knowing what the creed affirms, even if it is right. Believing is one thing, knowing is another; and instead of believing that we know, it would be better to know that we believe.

Ordinary Christians are and call themselves believers; they may sometimes be wise, but the two terms are not synonymous, quite the contrary; because those who know no longer have any *need to* believe. Listen to how the creed is recited and you will be convinced that the believer not only understands nothing, but recites it without giving the slightest thought to the meaning or any meaning whatsoever of what he is reciting. Freemasonry is identified with geometry: and in geometry, understanding and knowledge make sense, and believing makes no sense; anyone who claims to *believe* in Pythagoras' theorem would show that they understand nothing. Geometric knowledge can be communicated verbally, but it constitutes a science and not a doctrine about the mysteries of being. We therefore agree that there is no secret doctrine in Freemasonry, which, moreover, does not exist and therefore cannot be contrary to Catholic doctrine. The absence of such a secret doctrine may be judged a demerit or a merit, but it should at least allay animosity;

1. Raffaele Del Castillo - *Le tradizioni segrete* (Secret Traditions) - Milan, Bompiani, 1941.
2. See Oswald Wirth - *Le Livre du Maître* (The Book of the Master) - 1921, p. 119.

But this does not happen; and, just as nature once abhorred a vacuum (what nature and a vacuum are is not clear, but it does not matter), so the Church abhors the absolute vacuum that constitutes the secret doctrine transmitted by Masonic tradition. At least, this is according to Del Castillo's conclusions.

However, this observation is not enough to conclude that in Freemasonry absolute emptiness takes the place of a positive doctrine, spouted in a creed, communicable verbally, and acceptable and recitable by the believer, the parrot, and the phonograph. This is in turn another belief: the belief that words are necessary as well as sufficient to express and communicate wisdom. Del Castillo's belief has a crude, materialistic basis; it presupposes absolute ignorance of the possibilities of the spiritual order. If, on the other hand, wisdom is ineffable, it is necessary to resort to means transcending verbal communication in order to attempt, if possible, to acquire it; and the traditional transmission of an art or set of technical means that serve this purpose constitutes something more than absolute emptiness and even something more than a positive doctrine, even if not erroneous. Only that, instead of an easy and often unintelligent transfer of formulas and beliefs into the submissive and receptive minds of others, it is

necessary to *work*, to accomplish a task, a great task, in a workmanlike manner; instead of filling the skull of the faithful believer, it is necessary to free the craftsman himself from all kinds of constraints, to ennoble him, to transhumanize him.

The perfection of man is the goal of Freemasonry, the means is Masonic work based on and supported by symbolic initiation, that is, conferred and obtained through the intelligence of familiar Masonic symbols, just as a work of art is obtained by using the tools of the trade. This language makes understanding, intuition, mental and spiritual contact, inner guidance, and initiatory transmission possible.

The initiatory value of Masonic symbols is not limited to Freemasonry, where they are at home, but is also recognized by other associations where they can be found and where their presence needs to be justified or explained. For example, De Castro reports (6) that: “towards the end of the 17th century, a kind of talisman was discovered in Germany, in the tomb of a Templar who died before the dispersion of the order, on which were traced Gnostic symbols, the square and compass, the celestial sphere, the so-called Pythagorean pentagon (five-pointed star) and eight stars of the Gnostic ogdoad.” Similarly, in the alchemical figures of Basilio Valentino, the compass and square are placed in the hands of the two male and female halves of the hermetic androgyne or Rebis, as noted by Guénon (7). The same happens in the hermetic work *Basilica Philosophica* by Daniele Mylius, printed in 1610, and in an Italian alchemical booklet printed on lead plates, which we have reproduced and commented on in the magazine *Ur*, where the compass and square are placed in the hands of Tubalcaino, a character who is both Masonic and hermetic. The presence of these eminently Masonic symbols among the Templars and in Hermeticism is very significant and probably attests to the fact that there have been relations between the Masonic guild, the Templars, and Hermeticism since ancient times. However, Guénon also reports that in China, the compass and square are placed in the hands of Fo-hi and his sister Niu-kus, respectively, and there is no reason to think that there was a transfer from the East to the West or vice versa. However, leaving aside such questions, even if these Masonic symbols have a symbolic meaning outside Freemasonry, it is clear and natural that they are particularly suited to fulfilling this function in the Masonic symbolism of the craft guild, as attested by all ancient and modern Masonic manuals.

Finally, it should be noted, in relation to the effectiveness of the method of symbolic initiation, that according to Masonic customs, as in other brotherhoods, each apprentice had to be entrusted to and assisted by a brother who acted as his master, so that each apprentice or disciple had his own master to help him in his gradual symbolic initiation. Mrs. David-Neel, speaking of contemporary Tibetan initiations, says that there are three kinds of masters: those who teach by

1. G. De Castro - *Secret Brotherhoods* - p. 107; Athena editions, Milan.
2. See René Guénon - *Le Règne de la Quantité et les Signes des Temps* - Paris, 1945, p. 138.

through words, those who do not speak but make gestures, and those whose teaching she calls telepathic, that is, those who exercise their influence over the disciple directly without any external means of communication. Kremmerz seems to refer to a distinction of this kind when he says that it is very rare to meet a talkative master; and, taking into account the fact that Masonic language is traditionally said to be universal and therefore does not consist of any particular human language, one can glimpse that symbolic Masonic initiation is carried out or should usually be carried out through

support and meditation on Masonic symbols directed and encouraged by the inner guidance of the specially appointed master.

This mental or spiritual communication between master and disciple presupposes that there is harmony and agreement between them, which is why Freemasonry is a brotherhood cemented by *brotherly love* reminiscent of the proverbial friendship of the Pythagoreans. As sympathy and harmony increase and the rough stone is refined, it becomes more sensitive, more ready and confident in grasping the ideas suggested to it, in intuiting inspirations, and thus the work proceeds and is accomplished. Since the support of the inner symbolic language is that of Masonic symbols, it is essential that the apprentice become familiar with Masonic symbols, and therefore it is necessary that the apprentice attend lodge meetings and that these be conducted according to the rituals.

The existence of Masonic symbolism and ceremony is undoubtedly an anachronism, because it is a remnant of ancient times, but only those who believe in universal progress can think that for this reason we should or must free ourselves from such formalities and customs whose purpose they neither see nor suspect. In practice, the desired reform is unlikely to be implemented because symbolism serves to maintain unity among the lodges scattered across the surface of the earth; but in addition to this negative reason for preserving symbolism, there are positive reasons, and the consideration that the application of ceremonies and symbolism imprints in the mind those notions and that support which make possible the symbolic initiation of the apprentice who truly and seriously aspires to his spiritual perfection. apprentice who truly and seriously aspires to spiritual perfection.

Considerable help can also be provided by the refilali and the catechism, provided, of course, that they have not been altered through misunderstanding or deliberate intent with the pious intention of directing the apprentice towards other goals and destinations. In such cases, instead of helping, the rituals end up becoming a serious additional obstacle, which is why the study of Masonic rituals is so important. For now, we will focus solely on the ritual of the first degree, that is, the ritual of the free mason apprentice, bearing in mind the relevance of this study at a time when, for the renewal of Italian Freemasonry, the apprentice ritual is being handed over to a large number of new members of the old Masonic brotherhood.

Before examining the ritual of the free mason apprentice, it is necessary to make a few more historical observations.

As is well known, in the last two centuries, high degrees and different rites have arisen in Freemasonry. Some of these rites have arisen and disappeared, and some of the high degrees have not been and are not actually practiced. In Italy today, the rites are reduced to three: the symbolic rite, which has only three degrees, those of apprentice, fellow, and master; the ancient and accepted Scottish rite, which has thirty degrees in addition to the three mentioned above, although in practice these are reduced to far fewer; and the Memphis and Misraim rite, which has 95 degrees, also reduced to far fewer, and which also actually practices the first three degrees. The first three degrees are common to all rites; the higher degrees come later and are not the same for all rites. Historically, Freemasonry existed before the rites professing the higher degrees arose; the Scottish Rite in 33 degrees derives from a pre-existing "rite of perfection" dating back to around 1760, and the Memphis and Misraim Rite is even more recent.

All high degree rites, in Italy and abroad, whether extinct or still alive today, are based on the common foundation of the first three degrees of apprentice, fellow, and master, which are more or less the same for all rites and are the only ones common to all, so that ritually, Freemasonry, which existed when there were no

these three degrees, is summarized by these three degrees, which still ensure its unity and universality above all subsequent differentiations.

At the base of every Masonic organization are the lodges, which work only in the first three degrees and depend in various countries on their respective Grand Lodges. In ancient times, that is, before 1720, each lodge was autonomous and depended solely on the authority of its Venerable Master; the first Grand Lodge to be established by the union of four pre-existing lodges was the Grand Lodge of London, founded in 1717, and those lodges existing on the face of the earth that trace their origins directly or indirectly to the Grand Lodge of England or to lodges that in ancient times adhered to and reconnected with this Grand Lodge are called regular lodges. We do not intend to examine here whether and to what extent this criterion of the regularity of a lodge is justified, necessary, and sufficient. Consequently, all lodges accept or should accept, in fact and in law, the Constitutions and Statutes of Anderson's Masonry (1723), and should work according to rituals that are the same or in accordance with the ritual used by the ancient lodges under the obedience of this Grand Lodge, rituals which in turn were composed using ritualistic material prior to the formation of the Grand Lodge of England. The grand lodges that subsequently worked and continue to work in various countries according to their own rules have had to bear in mind the need to conform to this norm for the sake of their regularity, and this explains why the rituals of the first three degrees used in the last two centuries in various countries are basically quite similar to each other; they originate from a single ancient ritual, the elements of which they have handed down, taking care not to omit any, both out of traditional respect for the ancient brothers and to avoid accusations of irregularity. Freemasonry can be summarized in the first three degrees, and from the traditional point of view of initiatory symbolism, the rituals of the first three degrees are of incomparably greater interest than those of all the higher degrees of the various rites; this does not mean that the latter are always without value. However, in order to understand Freemasonry, ritually and traditionally speaking, it is unnecessary to consider the rituals of the higher degrees; the first three Masonic degrees of today are sufficient.

We have spoken of the rituals of the first three degrees. It should also be borne in mind that this distinction is relatively recent. Before 1730, there was no third degree ritual and no third degree; Pritchard's "Masonry Dissected," printed in 1730, ignores the third degree, whose ritual was established by an unknown brother around 1730, using ancient material, some of which was Masonic and some of which was not strictly Masonic. Before then, it seems that the ritual was the same for the degrees of apprentice and mason and that it was split into two separate rituals for the apprentice and the fellow craft when the third degree was created; the ritual printed in 1724 is the same for lodge work and contains elements of the two subsequently separate degrees. This ancient and unique ritual of the order is also anonymous; indeed, unlike that of the third degree, it is not possible to determine its antiquity, just as it is not possible to determine the antiquity of Freemasonry, but only to find historical traces of its existence in the Middle Ages and the Middle Ages.

These ancient rituals were revealed starting in 1724 by renegade or repentant brothers who believed they were revealing Masonic mysteries by making available to the public certain material secrets concerning meetings, work, secret words, signs of recognition, etc., not knowing or suspecting that the Masonic mystery, by its very nature, is absolutely incomunicable to the profane, and their illusion of revealing it proves that they had not even begun to grasp it.

From 1740 onwards, these publications became increasingly frequent in various languages and did not merely reveal and report the rituals, but commented on them, either by ridiculing them (as in the publications of Leo Taxil) or by explaining their alleged immorality or their alleged subversive and anti-religious character. The truth is that Freemasonry as it was established and appears in England, that is, in a Protestant country, is not Protestant, it is not sectarian, but tolerant, non-denominational, and freely and fraternally open to Catholics; and it was precisely this anti-sectarian character that aroused the mistrust and apprehension of sectarian Catholicism.

The Bull of Clement XII, prohibiting Catholics from joining Freemasonry, was bound to have repercussions on the character of Freemasonry in Catholic countries, and from a purely historical point of view

historical point of view, it is not true that the Church opposed Freemasonry because it was anti-Catholic, anti-Christian, anti-religious, or anti-spiritual, but it is true that the hostility of the Church had the effect of determining, by contrast, the character of Freemasonry in some countries, which was forced to defend itself by transforming itself into a secret association. However, it never became sectarian, and the rituals always remained in keeping with the spirit of tolerance, super-confessionalism, and independence of the ancient rituals.

It is not surprising to note that, with the passage of time and the transition from one language to another and from one Masonic organization to another, the rituals have undergone alterations and now present variations and additions compared to the older ones. It was believed that it was right to add and interpret, and therefore modern rituals contain elements that are heterogeneous in origin, character, and value. In general, however, the reformers have done, we repeat, as the ancient copyists of manuscripts did; that is, they have respected or at least intended to respect what they found in previous rituals, without daring to omit the traditional content, and have limited themselves to additions and interpretations in accordance with their culture, ideas, and beliefs.

These interpolations and alterations are easily recognizable, firstly because they appear in the rituals only from a given date and do not appear in previous rituals, secondly because they do not adhere to the characteristic symbolism of the old traditional elements and bear clearly visible signs of their heterogeneity, origin, and profanity, and thirdly because they unintentionally and sometimes deliberately depart from the tolerant, free, and universal position and character of Freemasonry as enshrined in the traditions of the order and the Statutes of 1717. and thirdly because they unintentionally and sometimes deliberately depart from the tolerant, free, and universal position of Freemasonry as enshrined in the traditions of the order and the Statutes of 1723. The work of cleaning up and restoring Masonic rituals therefore consists in recognizing and removing the sediment and encrustations, the unintentional misunderstandings and the tendentious interpretations. This work is particularly timely because many people are flocking to the doors of Masonic temples in today's revival

of the ancient brotherhood in Italy, and the ritual of the free mason apprentice has recently been reprinted by one of the most important Masonic bodies in Italy. Moreover, even readers who have any other edition of the ritual will easily be able to follow what we are about to say.

We can classify the elements of the ritual into elements that are strictly and indisputably Masonic, such as the elements of the craft and everything related to them; secondly, elements of an architectural, geometric, and numerical nature; and thirdly, elements of other kinds, such as linguistic, religious, historical, moral, philosophical, and political.

There can be no doubt or difficulty whatsoever regarding the origin and attribution of symbols strictly related to the craft; to use a phrase from Masonic jargon, there is no rain on them. They are a sure part of the symbolic heritage characteristic of the Order, both in fact and in law, and it is only a matter of recognizing and determining the genuine symbolic meaning of these symbols, which may also be multiple. These tools are: the hammer or mallet (from the French *maillet*) and the chisel, which are used to rough-hewn the raw stone; the lever, the ruler or the straight edge; the plumb line or perpendicular and the level or spirit level, which are used to draw vertical and horizontal lines; the mallet and the trowel; the square and compass, symbols of rectitude and measurement, between which the free mason must always stand; the apron worn by masons; and finally, the board or table for tracing or drawing, known in Old English as the tiercel board and in French as the *planche à tracer*, which is used for drawings and calculations and for the plan of the building to be constructed, for drawing the architectural piece or work to be carried out by the workers.

In ancient times, before beginning work on the lodge, a brother was charged with tracing the mystical picture of the lodge on the floor, which was then erased. This mystical picture of the lodge represented the temple where the work of the lodge was carried out, and the tools we have listed were drawn in this mystical picture of the lodge, but it also contained other elements. First of all, this lodge diagram has a rectangular shape, which is precisely the shape that a lodge, or rather its temple, must have. This rectangle is barbarically called 'quadrilong' in certain rituals, a literal translation of the French 'carré long', and is erroneously called a parallelogram in other rituals. The temple is carefully separated from the profane world and is accessed through a door by knocking ritually. This door is depicted in the lodge painting.

The etymology of the word temple refers to the way Etruscan priests set aside a portion of space separate from the rest and intended for religious and divinatory functions.

The Masonic temple is always oriented, at least symbolically, as were the ancient Christian temples and as is the Great Pyramid. The door of the temple is located to the west, facing the East, where the seat of the Venerable, who is the head of the workshop, is located. The word 'loggia' is an ancient Tuscan architectural term and refers in Florence to those parts of buildings that are open at the sides and are generally located at a height, such as the loggione (gallery) in theaters today. However, some loggias were also on the ground floor, such as the Loggia dei Lanzi, the Loggia del Grano, and the Loggia di Or San Michele.

This is not to say that the English word 'lodge' derives from Italian or vice versa. We simply wish to point out that this name is very appropriate for the Masonic temple because, according to the ritual, the

Masonic temple, which is based on a rectangle with the shorter sides facing east and west and the longer sides facing south and north, has open side walls and is bounded by twelve columns connected to each other by a waving ribbon (*houpe dentelée*) or chain of union or love, and is open at the top, that is, it is covered by the sky, that is, it is made in such a way as to be able to receive without hindrance the higher, spiritual or celestial influences, a feature that is also easy to find in various ancient Greek and Roman temples.

The temple is arranged according to three orthogonal axes determined by the direction of the local meridian, by that of the tangent to the parallel, i.e., from east to west, and by the vertical (from the *nadir* to the *zenith*).

From the center of the lodge, which is located at a point on the earth's surface, three axes extend, perpendicular to each other, and above each of them there is a polarity, and therefore the six directions of space (perpendicular to the six faces of the cubic stone).

The lodge, and therefore also the Mason, standing in the center, is located between heaven and earth, between east and west, and between south and north. The four sides of the temple correspond to the four cardinal points, as in the foundation of ancient cities, where two perpendicular lines drawn through the *cardo* or *cardine* divided the city into four quarters. Symbolically, the two poles of the vertical axis correspond to the pairs of high and low, upper and lower, celestial and terrestrial, spiritual and material; the east-west axis corresponds to the duality of light and darkness, since light comes from the east; and the axis directed according to the meridian from south to north corresponds to the duality of heat and cold because, for the inhabitants of the northern hemisphere, the sun rises in the east, i.e., in the east, and moves to the south at noon, and the countries located in the south, i.e., the southern countries, are the hot countries, while those located in the north are the cold countries. At midday, the sun is at noon for us and rotates in an apparent direction from east to south and then to west, rising in the east and setting or sinking in the west or west; therefore, the east-west pair corresponds to light-darkness, day-night, life-death.

In our hemisphere, the shortest days, i.e., the longest nights, occur during the winter solstice (while for us the solar day is then the longest); in the annual motion of the sun, the sun rises, for us in the northern hemisphere, during the winter solstice; this is the *Dies Natalis Solis Invicti*, which differs by four days from the Christian Christmas. The other solstice is the summer solstice, and between the two are the equinoxes; these are the *four seasons* of the initiatory tradition, the four annual solemnities, the four St. Johns of the Masonic tradition. Thus, we have the two pairs of summer and winter and spring and autumn. The four cardinal points of the diurnal movement of the sun correspond to the four moments of the annual movement, so that the north corresponds to the winter solstice, the east to the spring equinox, i.e., the first point of Aries, the summer solstice to noon, and the autumn equinox to the west. And the temple is surrounded by twelve columns, just as the annual orbit of the sun is marked by the twelve signs of the zodiac.

In Masonic symbolism, the concept of duality is presented in the pairing of certain symbols. The Mason stands between the square and the compass, like the lodge between earth and sky; the celestial sphere is circumscribed by the

temple, and its flat section, i.e., the circumference traced by the compass, is circumscribed by the plan or base of the temple, i.e., the rectangle whose sides are drawn at right angles by the square. The pair of vertical and horizontal lines, which has special importance in Masonic art, appears in the picture of the lodge represented by the two instruments of the plumb line and the level. Duality is also represented by the sun and the moon (crescent or half moon). The sun and the moon, which in all languages (except German) are always masculine and feminine respectively, correspond to day (*diurnus*) and night, to Janus (*Dianus*) and Diana, the father and mother (Jupiter and Demeter, the mother goddess or mother earth, the ancient mother), Osiris and Isis, Mars and Venus, active and passive. Good comes from the east, evil from the west. For the Romans, who turned towards the south in their augural rites, auspices that appeared in the east, i.e. to the left of the observer, were considered good omens and those in the west were considered bad omens; for the Greeks, who instead turned towards the (northern) pole in their religious rites, the east was on the right, and therefore the signs that appeared on the left were considered bad omens. The Greek meaning was then adopted by the Romans and has remained in our languages; therefore, something on the left is considered bad luck. This gives us the dualism of right and left, based on the priestly conception of a civilization that arose in our northern hemisphere and on a primordial polar tradition, i.e., facing the pole (North). A point on the earth's surface, for example the equator, moves towards the east as a result of the Earth's rotation. This sense of the Earth's rotation to the right is probably connected with the law of right-handedness in animal life (shells have a right-handed spiral) and with the difference between the common right-handedness of humans and the *gauche-rie* of left-handed people (*gauches*), whose dexterity lies in the left hand. Left-handed and ambidextrous people can also be geniuses (Leonardo), but the rule is that of the right hand, and Lombroso saw left-handedness as a character trait or indication of criminality, of a tendency to strike from the left.

Since the Masonic temple is open at the sides and at the top, the sun, moon, and stars are visible from inside the temple, and for this and other reasons they are represented in the lodge painting. The serrated ribbon also appears in the lodge painting, while of the twelve columns surrounding the temple, only two are represented, one white and one black, located to the west near the temple door.

The theme of duality, to which the symbol of the two columns at the entrance to the temple clearly refers, and which also appears in the symbolism of the square and compass, the sun and moon, etc., is taken up again in the floor of the lodge, which is depicted in the lodge painting. This floor is called a mosaic floor, not because of any particular veneration for the prophet Moses, but because it is a mosaic or musaic floor, so called in ancient times in honor of the Muses, and, since it is divided into black and white squares, it is also called the checkerboard and by some even the chessboard.

In addition to the sun, moon, and stars, there are other lights in the temple that are also depicted in the loggia painting. These are the luminous, transparent or sparkling Delta, which is a geometric symbol in the shape of an equilateral triangle with its apex at the top, and the flaming star or pentagram, which has the shape of the Pythagorean pentalpha, i.e., the five-pointed star (the Italian stellone). The loggia painting of the companion shows this pentalpha with one of the five points at the top. These two geometric symbols have appeared in Freemasonry since ancient times; and, since Freemasonry, or architecture, is traditionally identified with geometry, and since geometry was created from scratch by the Pythagorean school, any reference to geometry and the properties of numbers is undoubtedly a

reference to Pythagoreanism. In this particular case, these are none other than the two most important symbols of Pythagoreanism; the first is called by Freemasons by its Greek term Delta because its equilateral triangle shape is that of the fourth letter of the Greek alphabet, and coincides with the Pythagorean symbol of the tetractis, to which members of the Pythagorean order swore allegiance and in which some important mysteries of the Pythagoreans were gathered and expressed. As for the pentalfa, or flaming star, it is actually the symbol of the Masonic order, as it was of the Pythagorean brotherhood. These two symbols are purely geometric in nature, as they stand; and only by altering them with additions is it possible to see in the first nothing more than the Christian delta, i.e., the symbol of the Trinity instead of that of the quaternary or tetractis, and in the second the symbol of the star which, according to

one of the four Gospels, specifically the non-synoptic one, appeared to the three wise men and led them to the manger of Jesus. In this way, in order to support particular beliefs, the universality and symbolic homogeneity of the ritual is altered, distorting purely geometric elements and introducing elements belonging to a specific belief, a specific period, or a specific character, with the aim of showing one's brother the holy religion to which Freemasonry has no other task than to bring him back or even convert him if he has never been a Christian. It is Christianity, which denies the principles of freedom, tolerance, and Masonic independence, which, having been thrown out the door, comes back in through the window. And since few people know about the Pythagorean *tetractis* and everyone knows about the delta of Christianity, the belief that identifies the Masonic delta with the Christian one is accepted without question and opens the door to another Christianization, that of the flaming star. With such erroneous notions in their heads, the brothers become *disoriented* and symbolic Masonic initiation becomes almost impossible; and one wonders whether this is not precisely the aim *desired* by the creators of Masonic symbolism and tradition.

### III.

To complete the list of symbols that appear in the lodge picture, we mention the seven steps that must be climbed to reach the east where the Venerable sits, and finally the sword and the three windows that appear in the companion's lodge picture. These last two symbols are not very Masonic, while the number seven has a Pythagorean character and is part of the Masonic symbolism of sacred numbers. The rituals give a consistent explanation, saying that they are nothing more than the seven liberal arts (of the free Mason and of good morals) of the Pythagorean trivium and quadrivium, first mentioned by Boethius.

Masonic rituals, Masonic traditions, and old Masonic manuscripts dating from before 1700 explicitly mention Pythagoras, assert that Pythagoras was initiated into Masonic mysteries, that he founded a Masonic lodge in Crotona, Italy, and identified Freemasonry with geometry, the Pythagorean science par excellence. In relation to this traditional identification, there is the equally traditional claim by free masons that they alone have knowledge of the 'sacred numbers'. These are the Pythagorean numbers, that is, whole numbers understood in the traditional sacred initiatory sense and not in the profane sense of ordinary arithmetic, a distinction insisted upon by Plato, and which constitute the anagogical arithmetic called "formal" by Pico della Mirandola. The other numbers of the Pythagorean decade also appear in the lodge frame: the duality in the two columns to the west, in the black and white checkerboard, in the sun and moon, in the square and compass; the three in the triangular shape of the

luminous Delta and in that of the trowel, the four in the shape of the faces of the cubic stone and in the fundamental symbol of the tetractis, which is none other than the fourth triangular number composed of the sum of the first four numbers and for this reason identified with the decade; the number five in the shape of the flaming star and in the pentagonal shape of the knots of the serrated ribbon; the number six in the number of faces of the cubic stone and the six rays perpendicular to them, as well as in the six directions west and east, north and south, low and high; the number seven in the number of steps that must be climbed to reach the East East; eight in the number of the vertices of the cubic stone; nine in the number of the squares into which the board to be traced or *tiercel board* is divided by the two strips formed by two pairs of parallel lines perpendicular to each other drawn on it; and ten in the symbol of the tetractis or Pythagorean delta.

The elements of the ritual we have considered so far are closely connected with each other; in particular, geometry and architecture are traditionally identified with each other, and this is not a claim made only by free masons; Guénon observes (*Le Règne de la Quantité*, p. 34) that in Arabic the word *hindsah*, whose primary meaning is 'measure', is used to designate both geometry and architecture, the latter being, in short, an application of the former. Geometry is the science that introduces the concept of measure, and the compass is the instrument used in both geometry and architecture

or Freemasonry for measurement. In symbolic geometry and symbolic architecture, the compass is, as the ritual says, the symbol of measurement. On these considerations, says Guénon, "all conceptions assimilating divine activity, as the producer and organizer of worlds, to *geometry*, and also, consequently, to *architecture*, which is inseparable from it, are essentially based; and it is known that these conceptions have been preserved and transmitted, uninterruptedly, from Pythagoreanism (which was itself an 'adaptation' and not a true 'origin') to what still remains of Western initiatory organizations, however little conscious they may be of this at present." "This is particularly referred to, Guénon continues, in Plato's words 'God is always geometrising', words which correspond to the inscription that he is said to have placed above the door of his school: Let no one enter who does not know geometry."

We have noted that in these ancient elements of Masonic ritual, only the tools of the trade or art, of technique, geometric symbols, and numbers appear. There are no human elements, no traces of place or time; the absence of any linguistic, historical, national, religious, moral, philosophical, or political element or reference is absolute, with the exception of the word delta to indicate the triangle, which contains a reference to the Greek language. This implies the universality of Freemasonry in time and space and its independence from all human differentiation and limitation.

The lodge is rectangular in shape, but the rules do not specify the ratio between the length and width of this rectangle. If we apply Plato's criterion in the *Timaeus* for decomposing flat polygons into their triangular elements, the rectangle is decomposed by one of the diagonals into two equal right-angled triangles. According to Plato, among right-angled triangles, the most beautiful is the one in which the hypotenuse is twice the length of the shorter side, i.e., the right-angled triangle that is half of an equilateral triangle. In this case, if the shorter side of the rectangle measures one unit, the rectangle is inscribed in a circle with a radius of one unit centered at the center of the rectangle, i.e., the temple, and the other side of the rectangle is equal to the side of the equilateral triangle inscribed in the circle and to the height of the equilateral triangle whose side is the diameter of the circle. The shorter side would

therefore be equal to the side of the inscribed hexagon and the longer side equal to the side of the inscribed triangle; their measurements with respect to the radius of the circumference would be respectively one and the square root of three. This assumption is confirmed by the actual measurements of the lodge squares reported in books printed in 1740 and also reproduced recently (see Wirth - *Manuel du Compagnon*, p. 128). It should also be noted that the hinge of the compass drawn in the lodge square is located precisely in the center of the figure, i.e., at the point where the two diagonals meet. However, we cannot rely on this verification, nor can we exclude that, depending on the various cases, the ratio between the two sides of the lodge rectangle could have taken on different values.

After having seen and examined the elements of the ritual that are eminently or predominantly Masonic in character, namely the symbols of the craft and the architectural symbols, the geometric figures and the numbers, we now turn to examine other elements of the ritual and Masonic tradition that are of a different character and bear traces of their origin in a specific time, language, and belief. We can distinguish these elements as Jewish, Christian, and finally modern.

The main pagan elements are the chalice of oblivion, used during the ceremonial initiation, the three statues of Hercules, Minerva, and Venus that must decorate the lodge, the table to be traced, which according to some rituals is the symbol of memory (Mnemosyne), and the trials of the four elements to be overcome during initiation.

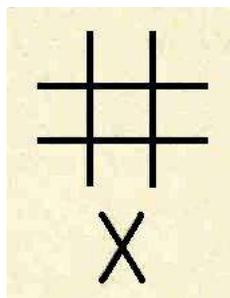
In fact (see G. De Castro - *Il mondo segreto*, IV, 160), in the General Statutes of Scottish Freemasonry, Orient of Naples, 1820, it is written that “the statues of Minerva, Hercules and Venus, representing wisdom, strength and beauty, must be seen in the Masonic temple”: and the *Recueil de la Maçonnerie Adonhiramite*, p. 93 says that the lodge of a master rests on three large triangular pillars called wisdom, strength, and beauty. These three qualities, says De Castro, must be found in every piece of architecture, that is, in every mystical writing, and were personified in the three goddesses Juno (power), Minerva (wisdom), and Venus (beauty). The usual and preferable triad is the first because it is more precise and clear in its personification, and the substitution of Hercules with Juno seems to have no other purpose than to obtain a triad composed entirely of female deities. These are undoubtedly three pagan deities that adorn the temple of the free masons, but the paganism of these elements is only apparent; they are clearly nothing more than the personification of Dante's 'divine power, supreme wisdom and first Love'. Dante belonged to the “faithful of Love,” invoked Apollo, the supreme Jupiter, sailed under the inspiration of Minerva and the guidance of the nine Muses, and yet he was never called a pagan. One might think that the presence of the three statues in question in the Masonic temple is due to an affinity between Freemasons and the faithful of love, especially since these three qualities reappear later in the names Campanella gives to the three assistants of the high priest in *The City of the Sun*. It should also be noted that it is perhaps not purely by chance that these three qualities are also found today in the designations of the head of a lodge, called Venerable, the head of the Rosicrucian Chapter, called Most Wise, and the head of the Areopagus, called Most Powerful. Only classical statuary could provide a way of representing these three qualities in a plastic form through the statues of the three deities who personify them, and the presence in the temple of these three statues of pagan deities or of the pillars dedicated to them does not attest to the pagan polytheism of Freemasonry or even to religious syncretism.

The chalice of oblivion, sometimes replaced by two cups, contains pure water on one side and a bitter drink on the other. During the initiation ceremony, the recipient must first drink the pure water, which then turns into the bitter drink. The commentary on this test, which the ritual places in the mouth of the Venerable, is purely moralistic and not overly profound; nor can it be, because the order in which the drinks are tasted has been reversed. However, the traditional designation of the cup of oblivion is significant and immediately and unambiguously refers to the Orphic and Pythagorean myth of the two sources of Hades, the source of Lethe and the fresh spring of memory or Mnemosyne, which are found in Virgil and Dante (Purg. XXVIII and XXXIII). The water of Lethe is *lethal* and brings oblivion and forgetfulness to those who drink it, while the fresh water of the other spring, which Dante calls Eunoè, refreshes those who drink it and “revives their faint virtue.” And just as the recipient in Freemasonry tastes the two drinks from the cup of oblivion before obtaining his initiation, so Dante places Lethe and Eunoè at the very end of Purgatory, and returns from the “most holy wave, renewed, like new plants renewed with new foliage, pure and ready to ascend to the stars.”

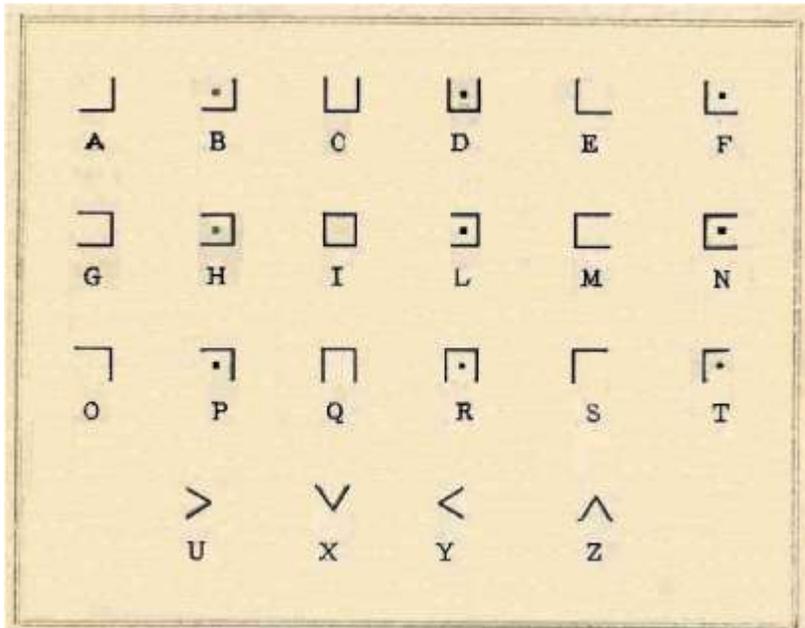
The myth of the two sources is undoubtedly pagan. In Neoplatonism, it has an eschatological character; the water of Mnemosyne confers salvation or health (in Dante's double sense of the word), the health that the Pythagoreans sought in life through catharsis and which they connected with the symbol of the pentalfa, writing around it the word health (ygieia), the health that the Latin augurs by saying *salve* as a greeting, and which could not be translated into English and German. The chalice of oblivion is the form in which the Orphic rite of the two sources of Hades is handed down in Freemasonry. The Orphic, drinking from the pure spring of Mnemosyne, escaped the waters of Lethe and became immortal, “no longer the son of the earth alone but of starry Uranus,” as the Orphic tablets used to serve the deceased as viaticum say. Thus, by ending his life, he is born into a new life under the starry sky of the Masonic temple and becomes a Mason, who stands, as the ritual says, between the square and the compass, that is, between the earth and the sky.

Let us move on to the important symbol of the table to be traced. The ritual of the free mason apprentice to which we refer, that is, the recently published Italian ritual, says that the table to be traced is the symbol of memory but does not justify this statement in any way; and this omission is somewhat regrettable because it would seem at first glance that the table to be traced should rather be seen as a substitute for memory, a kind of knot in a handkerchief, for use by those who have poor memory and need to rely on writing. To understand this, we need to briefly outline the history of the subject.

The board to be traced appears in the lodge frame and contains the so-called Masonic alphabet, represented simply by straight lines. The form most commonly used in the 18th century is as follows:



The Masonic alphabet in code is obtained simply by drawing the sides that delimit a box and, for some letters, inserting a dot in the middle. You must go from left to right and from top to bottom as in our writing, and in this way you have the alphabetical signs:



The signs for K and V are missing; the sign for L is still used today to indicate the word Lodge. This is how the table appears in the *Thuileur de l'Ecossisme - Nouvelle edition*, Paris 1821 and in the *Manuel Maonnique par un veterain de la Maonnerie*, 1820 by Vuilliaume. However, in

older books, such as in the work: *L'Ordre des Franc-Macons trahi*, which dates from 1742, the table to be traced does not contain the cipher alphabet and only contains architectural drawings. On the other hand, this cipher alphabet is clearly derived from the cipher alphabets given by Giovanni Battista Della Porta in his work *De furtivis literarum notis vulgo de fiferis*, Naples 1563, and by the Kabbalist Blaise de Vigenère - *Traité de chiffres ou secréto manière d'ecrire*, Paris, 1567. These writers have, with a certain degree of arbitrariness, adapted an ancient cabalistic cipher script, reported by Agrippa in his "*Occult Philosophy*" of 1533, to modern languages.

This Kabbalistic script is based on a tripartite table with three columns and three rows, and the boxes, or rather the sides of the individual boxes, in which one, two, or three dots are inserted, serve to represent the twenty-two letters of the Hebrew alphabet and the five final letters, establishing a correspondence between the three worlds: intellectual, celestial and elemental, and the three enneads of boxes, letters and numbers. This Kabbalistic alphabet of 27 signs is itself nothing more than a Jewish adaptation of the Greek written numbering system using the 24 letters of the Greek alphabet and three added signs or episemi. The number of signs, almost certainly inspired by Pythagorean considerations, was therefore 27, while the oldest Greek written numbering system in use at the time of Pythagoras used the initial letters of words, for example, the letter tt to write the number five and the letter A, the initial of decade, to write the number ten. Thus, the neo-Pythagorean Theon of Smyrna, in his "*Exposition of Mathematical Things Useful in Reading Plato*," which dates from the first century AD, dealing with the first nine integers that alone interested him, gives the following table:

$\alpha$	$\delta$	$\zeta$		1	4	7
$\beta$	$\epsilon$	$\eta$	ossia	2	5	8
$\gamma$	$\varsigma$	$\theta$		3	6	9

where the first nine numbers are divided into three rows and three columns.

On the other hand, although the table to be drawn only bears drawings in the rituals of 1742, its ancient English name is “tiercel board” or tripartite table, as for example in Pritchard's “Masonry dissected” from 1730; and this name can only be explained by supposing that the table to be drawn was tripartite. The Freemasons, who introduced into Freemasonry the cipher alphabet in imitation of the cipher alphabets of Agrippa, Della Porta, and Vigenère, found the tripartite board to be a beautiful and ready-made case for their purposes, but because the number of letters in modern European alphabets is not a multiple of nine, they could not limit themselves to the nine signs of the tripartite board and had to resort to two straight lines and four additional signs.

This brief analysis leads us to identify the table to be drawn with the tripartite table obtained from Theon's table when the nine Greek letters are removed, which represent the numbers and only the first nine numbers. These were the numbers contained within the Pythagorean decade, and they were the only ones that interested the Pythagoreans because all other numbers could be reduced to them by replacing them with their base or *pitmene*, i.e., the remainder of the division by nine or the number itself when it was a multiple of nine.

The table to be drawn, or tripartite table or tiercel board, is absolutely identical to the Pythagorean tripartite table of Theon of Smyrna; and the sacred numbers of the free masons are none other than the nine numbers of the Pythagorean decade. It indicates to the Freemason that architectural works, both material and spiritual, must be drawn and executed on the basis of the properties of ordinary and symbolic arithmetic. In this symbol, too, only lines appear, which serve to indicate numbers, so it does not refer to a particular language and is universal in character, although it takes us back to the neo-Pythagorean Theon. We can say that it is a Pythagorean and Masonic symbol that has a universal character because it has a geometric shape and indicates only numbers and their arithmetic and symbolic properties.

Having made this observation, we can also understand why some rituals may or prefer to affirm that the table to be traced is the symbol of memory. The table to be traced with its nine squares

, sums up in a symbol, in the etymological sense of the word, the chorus of the nine Muses, daughters of Jupiter and Mnemosyne, and is therefore also the symbol of their common mother, i.e., memory. It should also be borne in mind that, according to Plato and the Pythagoreans, the recognition of truth consists in anamnesis, i.e., in a reminiscence, in a recollection by the human cerebral consciousness of what the higher human consciousness has come to perceive and intuit through meditation and inspiration; and this must be placed above all in relation to the fact that, while for the layman ideas usually come and arrive from nowhere and in no way, in the case of the Freemason who proceeds systematically and tirelessly in his symbolic initiation, the the flow of ideas becomes coordinated thanks to the contemplation of Masonic, architectural, geometric, and numerical symbols that function as instruments and supports, and the inspiration of ideas becomes methodical, supported, and guided

ritually. The traditional secret art of spiritual edification intervenes validly in the very process of reminiscence or anamnesis, facilitating the inspiration of ideas and their *souvenir*. Finally, if we also bear in mind the life-giving function of memory symbolized by the source of Mnemosyne, which we have mentioned, we see that the interpretation of the table to be traced as a symbol of memory according to certain rituals loses its arbitrariness and becomes a simple and important consequence of the Pythagorean character of the symbol, which is at the same time the character of the Ennead, the sacred numbers, and the nine muses.

The Jewish elements in the apprentice's ritual are few. The names given to the two columns at the entrance to the temple are Jewish, and the sacred word of the degree is Jewish. Moreover, the brother who is asked to pronounce it during the tegolatura abstains from doing so because he “can neither read nor write,” both because his age does not allow him to do so and because it does not belong to Masonic language but to a particular language. In fact, the presence of this Jewish element is not in keeping with the universal character of Freemasonry. The refile printed in 1724 (the oldest known) does not mention a sacred word but only the word of Jerusalem, and it cannot be said with certainty that the two designations refer to the same word.

And since Jerusalem is a sacred city both for the Jewish religion and for the two religions that derived from it, namely Christianity and Islam, it could be that the word of Jerusalem did not have a Jewish character. In any case, the choice and adoption of the two Hebrew words to designate the two pillars was not contrary to the universality of the order in the eyes of the ancient Freemasons, because it was widely believed at the time that Hebrew was a language superior to all others, the sacred language spoken by God in the Garden of Eden. In any case, we can always trace it back to a specific period, to the period when this mistaken belief in the universal character of the Hebrew language prevailed. On the other hand, the legend of Hiram and the construction of Solomon's temple by Hiram certainly belongs to the traditional baggage of the Order, and it may be that the adoption of the sacred Hebrew words took place simultaneously with the establishment of the third degree ritual with elements taken from the Masonic legend of Hiram.

A less obvious and much more uncertain Jewish character can be attributed to the ritual's requirement that the recipient, before undergoing the trials of the four elements, must be stripped of all metal objects he is wearing. Crafts and arts belong to sedentary agricultural and building peoples and not to nomadic peoples such as the Jews; Jewish tradition specifies that the use of stones was permitted in the construction of an altar, but that the stones used had to be whole and untouched by iron, and this prohibition also existed at the time of the construction of the Temple in Jerusalem, since the stones “were brought to the site as they were, so that during construction no hammer, axe, or any iron tool was heard.” The ritual requirement to remove metal could be a reflection of this ancient Jewish prohibition; however, if we take into account the fact that the recipient is preparing to undergo the trials of the four elements and to expose himself in the temple to celestial or spiritual influences, and that metals can actually harm the transmission of these spiritual influences, we obtain a more reliable (and non-Jewish) explanation for this prohibition. This is the explanation given by Guénon (*Le Règne de la Quantité*, p. 155); this same reason justifies the ritual requirement that the recipient must be “neither naked nor clothed.”

Obvious modern interpolations are those that appear in rituals when they speak of progress, science (Western, modern, profane), morality, and even the homeland and humanity. Let us be clear: we see no reason to share the attitude of those who, in order to show themselves superior to nationalistic sentiments, are always ready to sacrifice their homeland on the altar of internationalism for the benefit of others; let us only say that these arguments have nothing to do with the goal of Freemasonry, which is the perfection of the individual; invoking internationalism for the benefit of others; let us just say that these arguments have nothing to do with the aim of Freemasonry, which is the perfection of the individual; invoking patriotic or humanitarian reasons to prove a theorem of geometry is absurd, as is mixing these arguments with the technical problem of spiritual edification.

According to the instructions given to the visiting brother of a lodge by the ritual, when asked, "What is done in the Lodge of St. John?", he must reply, "We build luminous temples to virtue and dig dark prisons for vice." This is the old traditional answer.

And at the opening of the proceedings, it is repeated by the first overseer, who declares that free masons gather to build temples to virtue, dig deep and dark prisons for vice, and work for the good and progress of the Fatherland and Humanity. This, with the two capital letters, is an addition, good or bad, but it is an addition.

This naive belief in progress and *evolution*, which reappears in other passages of the ritual, has belonged to the modern Western secular world for about a century and is therefore out of place in Masonic ritual. Today, faith in this optimistic dogma is no longer so unshaken, because the events of the last forty years and the dark clouds on the horizon are dispelling certain illusions; but other messianic illusions about the future of society have arisen to replace them, while the facts show those who wish to see that never before has brute force wreaked such havoc on justice, law, and humanity.

Moreover, in homage to historical truth, it must be acknowledged that even the famous Masonic trinity of liberty, equality, and fraternity does not date back to English Freemasonry in 1720 but is a French innovation that came many decades later. These are three fine words that have made their way into the Marseillaise, but as for the practical advent of these aspirations, we are still at the *sicut erat*, their advent is neither visible nor foreseeable. We had to live for twenty years under fascism and Nazism, and today the honorable United Nations reaffirms the monopoly of the *beati possidentes* and leaves, for example, to Italy, the beautiful sky, compulsory freedom, and the outlet of grumbling.

Another modern religion, fanatically and intolerantly dominant and accepted by almost everyone, although not codified in a defined creed, is the religion of morality, moralism, the myth of virtue as Pareto calls it, moralizing as Nietzsche calls it. And it has also penetrated Freemasonry. In certain rituals there is a kind of moralistic obsession; and during initiation the candidate is subjected to a string of questions that would put the interrogation of a philosophy exam to shame.

"What is ignorance? Why are the ignorant stubborn, irascible, and dangerous? What is error? What are prejudices?

What is a lie? What are passions? What are customs? What is morality? What is morality? What is law and natural law? What is virtue? What is honor? What is barbarism? What is vice? etc...". The layman naturally gets by as best he can; the Venerable who answers him gets by better, because he does nothing

but read the ritual, spouting a long-winded string of tedious and syrupy digressions that contain nothing important or traditional and sometimes work the miracle of transforming active and unrewarded brothers into dormant brothers.

The primary source of these dissertations is found in the ritual of J. M. Ragon; other rituals have patched them up and condensed them; thus, from the Scottish ritual of 1921, we learn that for Freemasonry, morality is a science based on human reason, which does not prevent it from also being the universal and eternal natural law that governs all intelligent and free beings (and the others?), and furthermore, morality is

scientifically explained conscience... Clear as daylight! Morality is a conscience, a natural law, a science based on reason... and navigates on the waves of fantasy and sentiment.

All nonsense that in practice forms a hypocritical screen for base and cowardly selfishness that justifies every arbitrary act committed in defense of morality, without being able to prevent intelligent and free scoundrels from doing as they please, mocking the gullibility of decent people.

Another undeniably modern interpolation is that when speaking of the stars visible in the sky, he defines them as globes that are held in equilibrium by mutual attraction; there is nothing wrong with this, but the concept is based on Newton's theory of universal attraction and clearly cannot appear in the writings of Freemasonry, which predates the great English physicist.

## IN CONCLUSION

Arturo Reghini was in the midst of resuming his activities as a writer and scholar of art and had prepared the two articles collected here when his earthly life came to an end. Taking up some themes already mentioned in Masonic magazines that are now almost impossible to find, he sought to clarify in these articles some particular aspects of the ritual of the free mason apprentice, which are either too neglected or completely ignored by those who frequent the lodges, at a time when the Italian Masonic family (and I use the singular deliberately) is still in a period of adjustment. Most likely, if Fate had allowed it, these would have been followed by others on a subject that is, by its very nature, practically inexhaustible. But we cannot know in detail what Arturo Reghini had in mind; we do know, however, his fundamental thinking and the principle that guided his actions for forty years: to set Freemasonry on the path to researching, recognizing, and reaffirming the original purity of its symbols, which are the heritage of our Italic, Pythagorean, and pagan tradition, separating them from all those elements that not only the centuries but above all the arrogant ignorance and fraud cloaked in wisdom have superimposed on them, so that their light was obscured and could no longer illuminate those who yearn for it.

It is impossible to write a conclusion to Arturo Reghini's masterful articles, because each of them has a clear and precise content; because the only possible conclusion cannot be written or spoken; because it is only knowledge, and it is the *knowledge of the apprentice's word*. What we can do, and what we intend to do, if the gods allow us, is to continue the work of Arturo Reghini, to whom we are bound by a bond that goes beyond blood and time; in this particular case, we hope to be able to continue to illustrate the ritual of the apprentice, in the unaltered spirit of our tradition.

A few days ago, we read in a pamphlet that claimed to encapsulate the essence of Scottish Freemasonry that “Christianity is undoubtedly the initiatory school that, better than any other, has been able to give the concept of regeneration a form suitable for the intelligence of the Western masses.” The writer—and too many like him—clearly ignores something that is an essential condition for anyone who wants to embark on initiation, even Masonic initiation, namely a concept that Arturo Reghini has repeated many times and that we still repeat: initiation is knowledge; and like the result of an arithmetic operation, it does not depend on personal tastes, on the “undoubted”, from being Christian or Buddhist, from a political opinion, from professing this or that morality, from place or time, from hyper- or hypofunctionality of the endocrine system, so initiation has absolutely nothing to do with all these and many other trifles, precisely because it is only knowledge. And anyone who demands initiatory knowledge adapted to their tastes, beliefs, or moods is either acting in good faith and is deluded, or is acting in bad faith; in any case, they are not, nor can they be, an initiate.

“And this shall be the seal that every man shall break.”

G. P.